

COUNTDOWN TO TAKEOFF

from OWL Magazine

You're booked on a 10:00 a.m. flight from Toronto to Vancouver. It will take at least 100 people to get your flight off the ground. Here's a look at what some of those people do.



11:30 p.m., Sunday: 10 1/2 hours to go

While you're snug and warm in bed, a team of cooks is working all night long. They're preparing the food for your flight, including special meals for passengers on unusual diets. By the time you're awake, all the meals will be arranged on individual trays and packed into huge containers, ready to be loaded on the plane.





Midnight, Sunday: 10 hours to go

The aircraft you'll be flying in landed at Toronto a short while ago. As soon as the last passenger disembarked, the cleaning crew swung into action. In just over an hour, the inside of the jumbo will be spotlessly clean. Fortunately, jumbos rarely get dirty on the outside—they fly above most pollution. But if a scrub-down is needed, long-handled mops and soap and water do the job.



2:00 a.m., Monday: 8 hours to go

After the cleaning crew finish, ground mechanics go to work on the plane. They're doing a "layover check" and it's carried out every time an aircraft is on the ground for more than six hours. By the time you're ready to drive to the airport, every part of the plane will have been checked.





8:00 a.m., Monday: 2 hours to go

A fuel truck pulls up to the aircraft and a fuel technician jumps out. It takes 20 min or more for the truck to pump up enough kerosene jet fuel from the airport's underground supply to fill all the jumbo's tanks. If your car could run on jet fuel, there would be enough in a DC-10's tanks to drive it around the earth 21 times!



8:30 a.m., Monday: 1 1/2 hours to go



While you were eating breakfast, an operations control agent was working out how to balance the load—fuel, passengers, cargo, mail and food—so that the plane flies level. Now the ramp crew is loading cargo and mail containers into the hold.



9:00 a.m., Monday: 1 hour to go

As you're arriving at the airport, the captain is studying a computer-prepared flight plan. The computer is given information about the weather, wind direction, weight of cargo, and where the plane is going. It then comes up with the best fuel-saving route possible. Once the captain has the flight plan, he and the flight crew board the plane and begin a careful check of all the aircraft's instruments and systems.



9:15 a.m., Monday: 45 minutes to go

At the check-in counter a passenger agent enters your name into a computer, which assigns you a seat. As you're passing through security on your way to the departure lounge, the second officer is walking around the exterior of the plane making a final safety check. And your luggage? It's gliding into the basement of the terminal on a





conveyor belt. There it's loaded into a container and by the time you're seated on the plane, your luggage will be in the hold.



9:45 a.m., Monday: 15 minutes to go

Inside the cabin the "No Smoking" and seatbelt signs come on. While the cabin crew is demonstrating safety equipment to you, the captain is receiving clearance from the control tower to leave the loading bridge. As unlikely as it might seem, a little tractor will push your jumbo backwards until it can maneuver on its own.



10:00 a.m., Monday: Takeoff

After final clearance from the control tower, your plane quickly accelerates down the runway, and at about 300 km/h it's up, and away.